

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR VOLUME 52

Another year has passed in the rich history of the California Botanical Society. Our society was founded by Willis Linn Jepson in 1913 with the first founding meeting at the Oakland Public Museum. Three years later (1916), the first issue of *Madroño* appeared. So, for approximately ninety years, our members have been contributing research and commentary intended to enlighten scientists, academics, managers, and the public as to the wondrous diversity and complexity of the flora and vegetation of our region.

There is, however, another prominent thread in our history, that of conservation (Ewan 1987). It turns out that Jepson became a friend of John Muir and was present at the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892. Jepson apparently recognized that knowledge leads to appreciation, and appreciation to the motivation for conservation. In September, 1913, the International Phytogeographic Excursion (IPE) was held in California and on September 12—five months after the founding of the California Botanical Society—Jepson gave an address at the IPE dinner. His closing words, as related by Ewan (1987), were as follows: “Now there arises a school of botanists, the plant ecologists, who are leading us back to the fields and woods, taking with them the experience of all other schools, and in addition making important use of the observations of the old-time naturalists. California is a glorious field for such work, and we welcome them here to help us appreciate our own flora, and to help Californians to an appreciation of it”.

In 1925, Jepson published his *Manual of the Flowering Plants of California*. At that time, he recorded 3727 native species and 292 species of “alien immigrants” (Jepson 1925). Our most recent flora, *The Jepson Manual* (Hickman 1993) records 5862 species including 1023 “naturalized aliens”, leaving 4,839 native species. So, while the number of recognized native species has grown about 30% since Jepson’s 1925 flora—a number one might expect given some seventy years of continued botanical exploration and systematic investigation—the number of alien species in California grew about 350%! Another way to think about this is that in 1925, non-native species represented about 7% of our wild vascular plants while in 1993, non-native species constituted about 17% of our flora. This increase in numbers of non-native species is really just the tip of the iceberg since a greater concern focuses on a small minority of these species that are highly invasive and capable of wreaking havoc on California’s native plant assemblages (e.g., yellow star thistle, *Centaurea solstitialis*, and Atlantic cord grass, *Spartina alterniflora*).

My digression into our founding heritage and this contrast between today and the past is motivated by a question that all of us perhaps should be asking ourselves. Given this heritage and the spirit of our times, how are we doing? Are we fulfilling our original mission to promote quality botanical research, disseminate this information widely so as to generate appreciation for our flora and vegetation, and are we continuing to build a foundation for the conservation of this biota into the future? I’m happy to say that I think the answer is “yes” and several events that transpired during this past year provide the grist for this viewpoint. It is my pleasure to recount some

of these events and acknowledge several society members who are in part responsible for this favorable situation.

Perhaps the most exciting event that underscores this perspective was the 21st Biennial California Botanical Society Graduate Student Meeting held during a blustery day at the San Francisco State University Romberg Tiburon Bay Conference Center on February 19, 2005. The setting was sublime and there was excellent attendance as 29 graduate student presentations were delivered in two sessions of Systematics, three sessions of Ecology, and one session each of Population Genetics, Paleobotany, and Ethnobotany. There was great representation from most of the major institutions in California and one graduate student traveled from as far away as the University of Washington. Vicente Garcia, the UC Berkeley Graduate Student Representative on the council this year, was a driving force in organizing the event along with a local San Francisco State University Graduate Student Representative, Diana Benner. Debra Hansen, another graduate student from San Francisco State, did a superb job of producing a program introducing the meeting, the schedule, and student presentation abstracts. The presentations were excellent and it was a serious challenge to determine outstanding speakers in all of the subject areas. However, ultimately, the three outstanding speakers were identified: Ms. M.M. Apodaca from California State University Long Beach in Ecology for her talk entitled “Evaluation of two constructed salt marshes in Long Beach, CA through examination of plant percentage cover and plant diversity”; Ms. Abigail Moore of UC Berkeley in Systematics for her presentation entitled “An ETS phylogeny of *Balsamorhiza* and *Wyethia* (Asteraceae)”; and Ms. Katrina Dlugosch from UC Santa Cruz in Population Genetics for her talk entitled “Genetic bottlenecks and rapid evolution in an invasive shrub”. Each of these outstanding speakers was awarded a \$100 prize. The scientific merit of these talks and their relevance to the challenges facing our region bode well for the future of the California Botanical Society.

Later that evening, we held our annual banquet thanks to the organizational effort of Second Vice President Gretchen Lebuhn, a conservation biologist at San Francisco State University. Our host, Dr. Alissa Arp, Director of the Romberg Tiburon Center, was generous in helping to offset our costs for using this fine facility. As always, the opportunity to meet old friends and make new acquaintances flew by far too fast as dinner was served and conversation shifted to individual tables. After making a few introductory comments, I had the pleasure of introducing Dr. Arturo Gomez-Pompa, a long-time Professor of Botany and Plant Sciences at UC Riverside, winner of the prestigious Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement in 1994, and most recently honored by the UC Regents as a system-wide University Professor. After a long and distinguished career with major contributions to tropical ecology and conservation, Arturo pushed aside retirement to embark upon a new adventure, the founding of an ambitious academic exchange and research program in the biologically rich but economically impoverished state of Vera Cruz in Mexico. He shared his enthusiasm and vision for this new venture, the Centro de Investigaciones Tropicales (Center of Tropical Research, or CITRO),

which is a collaborative effort between UC Riverside and Universidad Veracruzana. Long an advocate for recognizing the importance of indigenous people in the management of tropical forest ecosystems, Arturo described this effort is intended to bring research into practice in solving the real world problems of the people of Vera Cruz while conserving their rich biodiversity. Arturo's passion and dedication were a joy to behold. As hoped, he was a perfect inspirational counter-point to the youthful exuberance demonstrated by the graduate students earlier in the day.

Another great example of our effort to foster dissemination of contemporary botanical research is the series of public lectures put on each year at UC Berkeley following our council meetings. Once again, we have been fortunate to have our First Vice President, Stefania Mambelli of UC Berkeley, organize this series. Last year, the lecture series began with Ray Cranfill of UC Berkeley providing us insights into fern phylogeny, James Wanket of CSU Sacramento then explored the mysteries of Klamath Mountain forest relicts and refugia, Susan Lambrecht of CSU San Jose then presented her excellent work on the costs of reproductive effort in a native blackberry compared to an invasive non-native congener. Jim Shevock of the Californian Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit at UC Berkeley raised eyebrows and fascination with the wonders of mosses in a variety of contexts, Scott Stephens provided an insightful description of northwestern Mexican Jeffrey pine forests and its implications for U.S. forest restoration, Elizabeth Wenk of UC Berkeley described the fascinating results of her dissertation research into the physiological distinctions between species distributed on different substrates on a high alpine ridge in the eastern Sierra, and Michelle McMahon of UC Davis examined different floral morphs and their implications in leguminous tribe Amorphaeae. Once again, Vicente Garcia, the Graduate Student Representative, did a wonderful job organizing post-lecture social gatherings in the UC/Jepson Herbarium where a generally excellent turn-out kept the conversation and questions flowing. Thanks again to Stefania and Vicente for their exemplary efforts in the past and the great program underway for 2005–2006. Elizabeth Zacharias, last year's student representative, has also been a great support for the graduate student meeting and the public lecture series. For more information about the exciting new program Stefania has put together, see our website (www.calbotsoc.org).

One of the most important accomplishments this past year has been to engineer a smooth transition from John Callaway of the University of San Francisco as *Madroño* editor to John Hunter, affiliated with the UC Davis Herbarium and Center for Plant Diversity. The incredible work of John Callaway to bring a sense of continuity and timeliness to our publication of *Madroño* will long be remembered. However, he also contributed his steady hand to the transition of John Hunter and, as you can see from this issue, John Hunter has already stepped up and is doing an excellent job in keeping *Madroño* on track. The true test of the strength of an organization is the ability to stay fresh and strong in the face of change. We are indeed fortunate to have someone of the caliber of John Hunter step forward to take on this responsibility. I also want to acknowledge that he is not alone. Joining our board of editors this year are Robert E. Preston of Jones & Stokes and Ellen Dean of University of California Davis and EDaw. Jon Keeley continues as an exemplary book editor and Dieter Wilken and Margriet Wetherwax are our noteworthy collection editors. All of these individuals, and the

many individual reviewers and authors, collectively, make *Madroño* an excellent scientific journal.

Another very important contribution to our society is that of Curtis Clark of the Biological Sciences Department at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona and John La Duke at the University of North Dakota. These gentlemen keep our web site maintained.

We also are fortunate to have a vigorous and active council. These are individuals that work behind the scenes to keep the California Botanical Society adaptive and dynamic. They are at the vortex of our efforts to fulfill the mission laid out so long ago by founders such as Willis Linn Jepson. Susan Bainbridge, our corresponding secretary, has simply been invaluable in her depth of knowledge about our operations and creativity in problem solving. Staci Markos, our recording secretary, has been an inspiration with her vision and reliability in keeping communication active and engaged. Roy Buck, our treasurer, has devoted himself to managing our finances in a prudent and responsible way. These three were on the council when I arrived as president. Thank goodness they have been kind enough to stay on and continue to make their wonderful contributions. Bruce Baldwin, our immediate past-president, has also been a mainstay in keeping our organization on track. Two other long time at-large members of the council are Jim Shevock, National Park Service, and Dean Kelch of the U.C. Jepson Herbarium. Both Jim and Dean contribute tremendous experience and depth to our decision making process, as well as taking on several important projects.

Our newest at-large member is Jeffrey Corbin in the Department of Integrative Biology at U.C. Berkeley. Jeff is an active proponent of native grassland restoration. I'm excited to report that yet another example of the society fulfilling its mission is our decision to host a forum at the up-coming international meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology in San Jose from June 24–28, 2006. Our proposed forum will focus on "Ecological Restoration in a changing world: Case studies from California". Our goal is for the presentations at this symposium to be compiled into a special issue of *Madroño*. We are excited at the prospect of this special issue attracting new members and more attention to our society. I further see this as a great way for us to further the conservation mission that is a vital part of our society.

I'm also very pleased to announce that our new Second Vice President, J. Travis Columbus from Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, will be organizing our annual banquet this year in southern California at that venue. The banquet will take place on February 11, 2006, and our very own stalwart, Jon Keeley of the Sequoia and Kings Canyon Field Station with the USGS Western Ecological Research Station in Three Rivers, CA, will be delivering this year's annual banquet address on the topic of "Ecology and Evolution of Fire Prone Ecosystems in California". Jon has an impressive history of publications investigating the influence of fire on the vegetation of California. Given the centrality of this management issue to the southern California community, we are hoping that our southern California colleagues and other interested members of the public will come to hear Jon's entertaining and important scientific observations and perspectives on this critical issue.

Another project we're working on this year is the goal of putting back issues of *Madroño* on-line and, ideally, making recent issues available to our members, possibly through our web site. Bruce Baldwin, Jim Shevock, and

Sue Bainbridge will be working on this important project. Stay tuned!

In summary, I'm not precisely sure what Willis Linn Jepson originally envisioned for the California Botanical Society. My guess is that he didn't foresee the possibilities of the internet, the technological innovations that have broadened the depth and breadth of our research, nor perhaps could he have foreseen the dramatic transformation of our natural environment due to the collective activities of the millions of humans that have settled in our region since his time. Yet, if he were able to adjust to these realities, as we must, my guess is that he would be gratified to see what we have become. In so many ways, we are holding true to the mission—both explicit and implicit—that resulted in our creation. For that, I am thankful. But even today, I'm sure that Jepson would seek to inspire us with his motto: "There is something lost behind the ranges over yonder. Go you there." (Hickman 1993). Indeed, there are still unexplored places. Let us never forget the joy of discovery and the omnipresence of the unknown while we strive to create the foundation of knowledge and

insight that will help our society appreciate and conserve this rich natural legacy that is our ultimate inspiration.

Because of you, the dedicated members of the California Botanical Society, and the efforts of people such as those identified above and many others, our organization continues to flourish. Jepson's dream is still vibrant. Thank you!

MICHAEL VASEY

October, 2005

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